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# Special espionage

## For Canada, Igor Gouzenko was the Russian spy who came in with the code

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JUST ABOUT the worst thing that can happen to a spy network occurred on Sept. 4, 1945. The events of that date changed espionage — certainly for the Soviets.

At 8 o'clock that September evening, Igor Gouzenko, jittery and wet with perspiration, looked around for the last time in the steel-barred code and cipher room in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, Canada. As in the movies, he squared his shoulders, trying to look natural, and walked out of the door for the last time — and into spy history.

He took with him, concealed under his shirt, 109 classified documents that he had carefully selected, including the cipher text of secret messages, instructions to espionage agents and records of cash paid to Canadian citizens by Col. Nicolai Zabotin, the Soviet embassy military attache.

Actually, Zabotin's undercover role was the reason for his presence in Canada. He was head of a remarkably successful spy apparatus in North America. He was a colonel in the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence agency.

Gouzenko, who died last month, was a lieutenant in the GRU, masquerading as a civilian, a key in the espionage net. As a trusted code and cipher officer, it was his function to encode and encipher intelligence messages for radio transmission to Moscow Central and to translate the instructions that came back.

He was 65 when he died. He had become a Canadian citizen, protected by the Royal Candian Mounted Police, living with his family under an assumed name, in fear of his life, certainly in the early years of his desertion. According to the RCMP, his picture never appeared in a mass circulation publication.

The name under which he had become known to his Canadian friends and acquaintances was not announced by the Canadian government even in death.

Old spies have two fears that cause them to tremble. One is that an agent will change sides, revealing the bits and pieces he, or she, knows.

The other, however, is a far greater dread: That a trusted cipher officer goes over to the other side, a far worse possibility because the code expert has access to communications involving more than one spy, and so knows more than just bits and pieces.

His information sent 11 persons to prison. It led to the exposure of Allan Nun May, a British atomic physicist. It stripped Fred Rose, a member of the Canadian Parliament, and Fred Carr, an organizer of the Canadian Progressive (Communist) Party, of respectability, revealing that their perfidious goals included uranium and atomic secrets in the days when the USSR didn't have the atomic bomb.

Gouzenko's defection led to major changes. His desertion exposed the Canadian Communist Party as an instrument working against its own people. So in Moscow the reaction was quick and emphatic, recalls old CIA spymaster Harry Rositzke.

Henceforth, Joseph Stalin decided, Soviet intelligence would not directly use foreign Communists as agents. The political consequences were too harsh, especially in Europe — in those days tending to vote Communist — because it fortified the image of the party as a tool of a foreign power.

The other change affected "legal" spies, the backbone of every spy system, ours included. Nearly every embassy houses a spy chief, a legal resident of the embassy who is disguised as some sort of attache. His, or her, real job is usually known to the host country. The legals have diplomatic immunity. If caught, they are tongue-lashed and sent home.

Often the "legals" have contemporaries, who may or may be known to them. These are the "illegal" spies, professional intelligence agents under cover of ordinary citizens, who are without diplomatic immunity. If caught, they face years in prison, unless they can be traded for a spy lost by the other side.

There are many advantages of operating a spy headquarters out of the embassy. The diplomatic staff is immune to arrest and this leads to great initiative and derring-do. The embassy is immune to search. The code room is inviolate. The diplomatic pouch can't be searched by the host nation's police. Non-intelligence employes can be used for useful spy chores.

But these pluses also lead to carelessness. After Gouzenko's defection, Moscow learned that it kept too much information in its embassy files, which Gouzenko had astutely raped.

Today there are strict limits in the amount and kind of data retained in "legal" residency files, says Rositzke. All communications to and from Moscow are on microfilm. Written communications, except for barest essentials, are regularly checked every day and monitored by Moscow. A resident spy handler must rely on Moscow for background on current operations, even for security reviews of spies under his control.

Gouzenko's life after defection — like that of many spies — did not turn out to be a bowl of cherries. In a book he wrote, he mentioned he admired the high standard of living of the West. This, coupled with a notification that his tour in Canada was over and he would be replaced soon, figured in his desertion.

His best-selling book, "The Fall of a Titan," was made into a movie, serialized and condensed, grossing more than $500,000 — a princely sum in the 1940s and 1950s. Somehow the money was spent. In 1968 he was reportedly nearly broke.

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